Talks with G-8 countries

379. SHRI S. ANBALAGAN: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Prime Minister held talks with the leaders of the G-8 countries on the sidelines of the recent G-8 Summit; and

(b) if so, the details thereof and the outcome of the talks, country-wise?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) Yes.

(b) Prime Minister had a bilateral meeting with the President of France on July 7, 2005 on the margins of the recent G-8 Summit. Discussions were held on bilateral, regional and global issues of mutual interest. The discussions enhanced mutual understanding on these issues. In addition, Prime Minister also met other world leaders participating in the Summit.

Congress President's Russia visit

380. SHRI YASHWANT SINHA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether he accompanied the Congress Party President Shrimati Sonia Gandhi to Russia during her recent visit to that country;

(b) if so, whether it was a personal visit, an official visit or a State visit; and

(c) the capacity in which he accompanied Shrimati Sonia Gandhi during this visit?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI RAO INDERJIT SINGH): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Smt. Sonia Gandhi made an official visit to Russia in her capacity as Chairperson of the UPA at the personal invitation of President Vladimir Putin.

(c) Smt. Sonia Gandhi's visit to Russia was part of high level exchanges between India and Russia. The Minister of External Affairs accompanied Chairperson UPA in his official capacity.